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SUBJECT: Animal Cloning Attitudes in Poland

REF: Warsaw 1114

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¶11. (SBU) Summary. This cable reports a round table discussion Sept. 19 in Warsaw on the subject of scientists' views on animal cloning and the food supply. January's announcement of deregulation for clones by FDA has sparked controversy, with a vote by the European Parliament against the technique and the use of progeny in the food supply. Polish scientists want more information about the United States' actions on cloning, and express support for cloning safety, but are exasperated by the unscientific approach taken by the politicians with oversight responsibility for food safety issues. U.S. policymakers should be wary about potential trade disruption for dairy and products if the United States allowed significant amounts of products from clones and their progeny into the food supply. Traceability is needed to keep those products from being shipped to markets like the EU and Poland. End Summary.

¶12. (SBU) American Holstein Association (AHA) Vice President for International Marketing, Dr. Gerardo Quaassdorff, met with Polish scientists and veterinary health officials to discuss AHA's position on cloning and what it may mean eventually to Europe. Quaassdorff distributed AHA's guidelines for registering clones. Quaassdorff explained the International Holstein-Friesian Association (IHFA) would take up the issue of animal clones and likely will adopt the position of the AHA for a clone registration at its upcoming meetings in Ireland. Quaassdorff said that there are 150 cloned dairy animals in the United States. Quaassdorff said cloning already follows international (IHFA) embryo transfer protocols. He said AHA members were not as interested in clones as they are in genetically engineered animals (GE); members are focused on improving genetics not preserving them. He said his industry wants to know where clones are so they will be tracked. He said the industry was really only interested in cloning animals for show and then using the technique in the development of GE animals. He said cloning would be used as a niche, in a very limited way and to maintain a breed.

¶13. (SBU) Attending the meeting were Professors Edmund Dymnicki, Chief of the Institute of Animal Genetics and Breeding of the Polish Academy of Science, in Jastrzebiec, near Warsaw; vice director of research from the same institute, Professor Lech Zwierzchowski; Poland's deputy chief veterinary officer, Dr. Krzysztof Jazdzewski; and Professor Ewa Bartnik, Warsaw University, Department of Genetics and Biotechnology. These scientists serve in the Polish Academy of Science, are advisors to the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment, and are unequivocal supporters of the application of

sound science in food and environmental safety. Each admires the United States with its cutting-edge innovations in agricultural science and frequently comments to the media.

¶14. (SBU) Scientists expressed relief at AHA's statement that there were no large scale, immediate plans for cloning. They thought the EU regulatory regime was behind and needed now to focus on rulemaking. Scientists reported there are no cloned dairy cattle in Poland. Their laboratories do clone pets; the Balice Institute for Animal Breeding near Krakow has developed a non-allergenic cat. They said Europeans already mistrust cloned plants and that public acceptance of cloned animals will be lower. On cloned and GE animals as bioreactors to create new medicines, they see a clear pathway to regulatory use. They said that they agreed with FDA and EFSA rulings on clones as safe. Anyone with an understanding of basic biochemistry understands cloning is safe, one stated.

¶15. (SBU) They expressed support for the idea of cloning techniques in species' preservation. Polish scientists use cloning to preserve the European Bison (Bison bonasus) and in Italy the wild mountain goat Muflon (Ovis musimon). They cautioned cloning was not a slam dunk for preservationists since the problem with endangered animal populations was a lack of genetic variability. Cloning provides a tool to catalog and study methods that might lead to preservation solutions by GE or cross breeding to maintain populations with desperate measures, they said. Poland has plans to preserve some cattle such as its historic Polish red. There are 400 Polish reds, none purebred, but a large enough population that cloning and GE may be useful, even to eliminate the crossbreeding with Danish reds that occurred 120 years ago.

¶16. (SBU) Scientists expressed fatigue with the process of food policy development in Europe. They complained about the religiosity they face from pressure groups and politicians against new scientific applications. They expressed concern the United States

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misunderstands policymaking in Europe and focuses on regulatory rulemaking and is not pragmatic with an EU food safety system dominated by public opinion polling. Scientists thought their political leaders would not admit clones or progeny to the food supply of Europe. They reacted positively to the ideas of AHA, that cloning will be limited. They said that the announcements coming from FDA and USDA indicate to Europeans that the US is moving ahead quickly. They are uncomfortable with the speed the issue is hitting Europe without preparation of the public or political mind, recalling the 1995 introduction of GM crops or the inadvertent release of unapproved biotechnology events in 2001. They thought for markets negative on new agricultural science it was important to make strong regulations in Brussels so that nations such as Poland might face EU disciplines on its approach to clones.

¶17. (SBU) The greatest threat to scientific progress in cloning today, they said, is whether clones will be regulated as genetically modified organisms. The proposed draft Polish law on the cultivation of plant GMO's (reftel) and the criteria for scientific study indicates to some scientists that the Ministry of Environment will regulate clones as GMO's. Scientists believed this regulatory approach may prevent them from using cloning techniques and they were being vocal to their superiors that this approach was scientifically unjustified. The Environment Ministry regularly rejects requests for scientific studies, overruling scientist's recommendations. No one wanted the Ministry of Environment involved in the issue of clones and all were overwhelmingly negative about the Environment Ministry and its political approach to science.

¶18. (SBU) Dr. Quaassdorff visited September 17-19 with officials and association representatives in Warsaw to discuss mutual recognition of herd registers. Poland is an important, fast growing market for U.S. dairy genetics. AHA and USDA/FAS Warsaw are creating a strategy to overcome the additional barriers third-country livestock genetics imports face with Poland's breeding registry law. Dr. Quaassdorff's points on his industry's approach to cloning shows the benefits for stakeholders in the United States to be engaged with European scientists and that many scientists share U.S. views. Scientists left the meeting more comfortable with the U.S. approach

to cloning and with the issue of cloning in its proper, perspective as a niche.

¶19. (SBU) Europe and Poland import processed U.S. dairy products, and here there is some need for attention. Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer Jazdzewski said that the prospect of cloning and progeny in the food supply was being faced for the first time. Jazdzewski said that the issue has been ignored, but was heating up. Agricultural Counselor asked whether U.S. non-fat dry milk and whey powder shipments to Poland and Europe that included products from clones and their progeny would face a shutdown if it was suspected that clones' products were in export channels. Jazdzewski replied U.S. industries with EU market access for animal products should adopt traceability requirements on clones and communicate actively about whether clones and their progeny will be in U.S. foods until such time as they have clearance from Europe.

¶10. (SBU) Comment. Industry outreach might be effective if it used well spoken producers and/or wildlife preservationists and targeted the need for clones in GE animals for new medicines, genetic preservation, development of human transplantation, and for pets/show animals. Working on clones and GE animals at present distracts from larger issues like agricultural biotechnology and the asynchronous approval problem for U.S. soybeans. End Comment.
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